

Formative Assessment Project

Purpose

The purpose of the Formative Assessment Project (FAP) is to develop teachers' capacity to frequently monitor the learning of all students and adjust instruction to better meet their needs. In Vermont, formative assessment is further defined as the use of evidence to inform instruction. Building on the extensive research on formative assessment and educator professional development, the project also creates small sustainable teacher learning communities (TLCs) in which participants learn and refine the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement and sustain formative assessment practices in their classrooms. The project is further supported by a DOE facilitated online community for the TLC leaders.

FAP is an extension of an earlier pilot involving nine schools and represents the continuing commitment of the Vermont Department of Education to support Vermont teachers in addressing and resolving student achievement gaps.

Link to School Quality Standards and Local Assessment

The VT DOE considers formative assessment (assessment *for* learning) to be an essential component of any comprehensive local assessment plan ([Core Principles of Local Assessment](#)). This same focused attention to equal opportunities for students, continuous progress monitoring, and professional learning communities that are central to FAP is mirrored in other concurrent statewide initiatives, including [Responsiveness to Instruction \(RtI\)](#), [Creating Responsive Schools \(CRS\)](#), and [Teaching All Secondary Students \(TASS\)](#). Beginning this spring, the Commissioner's Required Actions for schools in [School Improvement](#) will require progress monitoring for students.

Implementation Design

The use of the Keeping Learning on Track™ program offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) provides a consistency of language and training as well as integrity of process. Combining this program with the efficiencies of regional access allows us to offer valid and sustainable professional development. The Department in partnership with the [Educational Service Agencies \(ESAs\)](#) provided training for approximately 150 teachers and 30 TLC leaders during the summer of 2007 to extend the project beyond the original nine schools. Further questions about specific regional professional development opportunities related to the Formative Assessment Project should be directed to your local Educational Service Agency. For more general questions regarding the role of formative assessment in your school, contact information is listed below.

Expectations and Requirements

Participating schools select 4-8 member teacher teams. Maximum benefit is achieved when teams are aligned horizontally by grade level and/or vertically by shared curricular focus to facilitate coherent discussion and instruction. All participants (including principals) complete a self-evaluation/needs assessment followed by a comprehensive three day summer training session. Certified KLT (Keeping Learning on Track) trainers present the relevant research basis and facilitate a variety of learning activities necessary to acquire and practice formative assessment knowledge and skills. All participants leave the session with personal action plans to further refine or augment in the TLC process throughout the year.

Additionally, each team must have a designated leader to manage the convening, facilitation, focusing, and brokering of an active learning community. TLC leaders may be drawn from existing school or district leaders, or from other experienced professionals from outside the local school community. All identified TLC leaders must complete an additional 2 days of training prior to the start of the school year.

Subsequent to the training session, teachers are required to participate in an on-going learning community (TLCs) which includes a regular monthly 2 hour meeting facilitated by the designated TLC leaders. Meetings provide a structured opportunity for teachers to discuss and refine their formative assessment practices, acquire new learning, and revise their personal action plans. TLC leaders also participate in on-line threaded discussions that prepare them to focus and deepen the TLC dialogue.

Finally, teacher teams and principals are asked to participate in a one day mid-year forum to share successes and challenges and be introduced to new learning. Although, schools are not required to collect formal data or issue summary results at the completion of the project, all schools are strongly encouraged to share results with stakeholders and develop plans for extension to the faculty at large.

Benefits: Strengthening Leadership for Learning

Teachers engage in sustained, job embedded professional development; the most effective means of increasing instructional effectiveness. Through TLCs, teachers draw upon each other's support and experience, focus attention on pedagogy, and share accountability for increasing instructional effectiveness for their students. Teacher leaders emerge through their involvement in the TLCs creating valuable internal resources for the learning community.

Principals are included in all trainings, required to secure time for TLC meetings, and expected to use reflective classroom walk-throughs to endorse and support their staff's purposeful use of formative assessment to meet the learning needs of *all* students.

Students, acquire and apply the five primary FAP strategies to assure that they will have greater opportunity to be more active, effective, and accountable in their own learning in the classroom.

Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), in collaboration with the DOE, provide coordinated professional development that would allow participating teachers to be eligible for graduate course credit and re-licensure.

Pilot Project Report

View the report of the [Formative Assessment Pilot Project](#).

Ken Remsen, Program and Training
828-5142
ken.remsen@state.vt.us

Carol Duley, ESA Coordinator
828-3843
carol.duley@state.vt.us

Arlyn Bruccoli, Teacher Leader On-Line Community
828-0223
arlyn.bruccoli@state.vt.us